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SUBJECT: CYPRUS NOMINEE FOR 2010 SECRETARY OF STATE'S AWARD FOR
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN OF COURAGE

REF: STATE 111471

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¶1. Embassy Nicosia is pleased to nominate Ms. Androulla Christofidou, a human rights activist working to combat trafficking in women in Cyprus, for the 2010 Secretary's Award for International Women of Courage (IWOC). Following is the information requested in Reftel.

¶2. Personal and biographic information is as follows:

LEGAL NAME: Androulla Christofidou
JOB TITLE/ASSOCIATION: Human rights activist associated with STOP
International in Cyprus
DATE OF BIRTH: December 19, 1936
COUNTRY OF BIRTH: Cyprus
CITIZENSHIP: Cyprus and United Kingdom
ADDRESS: Ilioupoleos 9, Nicosia, Cyprus
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LANGUAGES: Greek, French, English, Portuguese, Spanish

¶3. Embassy Nicosia's Mission Strategic Plan identifies combating trafficking in persons (TIP), particularly the trafficking of women to work in Cyprus's commercial sex industry, as one of its four main priorities. Cyprus is a destination country for TIP victims from, inter alia, the Dominican Republic, Romania, Moldova, the Philippines, and Ukraine. Many of these victims are brought to work in one of several dozen "cabarets" on the island for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation.

¶4. There are powerful business interests behind these lucrative cabarets; anti-TIP activists report that cabaret owners have their own "impresario" union to lobby against government policies that interfere in their "business." Cabaret owners implicated in TIP have been reported to use coercion and threats of physical violence to scare off witnesses and their critics. One of few voices, but a very powerful one, fighting back against cabaret owners implicated in human trafficking in Cyprus is 73-year-old Androulla Christofidou, known as "Mrs. Androulla" by her supporters and associates.

¶5. Mrs. Androulla, a human rights activist associated with STOP International in Cyprus, is a tireless advocate for trafficked women in Cyprus. For years, she has pushed for long-term institutional change by lobbying government officials at the highest levels to take action against TIP and increase protection for trafficking victims. To assist her in putting pressure on the government, she has created her own network of individuals in various fields, including the media, NGOs, the diplomatic corps, and social circles, who also raise money for TIP victims and rescue women from the hands of traffickers.

¶6. The broad anti-TIP coalition that Mrs. Androulla works with organized a conference in Cyprus in November 2008 that brought

together the groups STOP International, L'Association Contre L'Exploitation et L'Esclavage Sexuel ("Association Against Exploitation and Sexual Slavery"), Friends of Humanity and the Cyprus Anti-Trafficking Movement. It attracted speakers from the U.S. and the EU, as well as representatives of the National Police, the House of Representatives, the Attorney General's Office, the Turkish-Cypriot community, several NGOs, and many journalists.

¶17. In addition to advocating for institutional changes, Mrs. Androulla has generously used her personal resources to help trafficked women who have chosen to stay in Cyprus to testify against their traffickers. (Note: The GOC also provides some assistance to such victims.) During a recent case involving TIP victims from the Dominican Republic, Mrs. Androulla opened the doors of her own home to a group of women as they prepared to testify in court against the cabaret owners who reportedly held them captive as sex slaves.

¶18. It takes a great deal of courage to speak out against the contradictions surrounding women and sex in Cyprus, where the penal law prohibits "living off the earnings of prostitution" and a comprehensive anti-trafficking law exists on the books, yet where the government licenses and regulates the "cabarets" where prostitution and trafficking in women clearly take place. In light of the powerful groups interested in maintaining the status quo, only the bravest of individuals dare to stand up for the rights of vulnerable foreign women who have been trafficked in Cyprus. For this reason, Mrs. Androulla deserves public recognition for her outstanding work protecting women and challenging the entrenched culture of acquiescence in Cyprus.

¶19. Advocating for the rights of trafficked women is just the most recent activity that Mrs. Androulla has undertaken to protect global human rights. Over many decades, Mrs. Androulla, an educational psychologist by training, has helped fight global illiteracy, helped

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build schools in Guatemala, sheltered refugees fleeing the Pinochet regime in Chile, and taken in refugees fleeing to Switzerland to escape violence in Greece during a military coup. Notwithstanding the outstanding work she has done in Cyprus and around the world, her work has not yet been recognized publicly.

¶10. When asked why she is so passionate about helping trafficked women in Cyprus, Mrs. Androulla simply said that all her life, she has "sympathized with the underdogs." "The most terrible type of exploitation," she explained, "is sexual exploitation because it kills the soul." For her brave and selfless work challenging established and powerful cabaret interests in Cyprus to help victims of human trafficking, 73-year-old "Mrs. Androulla," an activist with global vision and experience, must be honored and put forth as an example.

¶11. Post has notified Ms. Christofidou of this award nomination and if selected, she would be willing to accept the honor in order to draw global attention to the human trafficking situation in Cyprus.

¶12. For further information regarding this nominee, please contact either Poloff Jason Chue at ChueJ@state.gov/(+357) 22-393-367 or Political Specialist Anna Maria Yiallourou at YiallourouAI@state.gov or (+357) 22-393-363.

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